United Nations S/2014/356

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 May 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 19 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you and to the members of the Security Council a note entitled "Proposals for the interim stabilization of the crisis situation in Abyei" (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Francis Mading **Deng**
Permanent Representative

14-53656 (E) 210514

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 19 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Proposals for the interim stabilization of the crisis situation in Abyei

I would like to begin by thanking the members of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to share my views on an issue not only of great concern to our country of South Sudan, but also to me personally. As I am sure at least some members of the Council know, I come from Abyei. However, I hope that what I have to say is objective and constructive enough to gain the understanding and support of Council members.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report, which provides insightful analysis of the crisis situation in Abyei and offers constructive proposals on the way forward. I would also like to commend the Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), Lieutenant General Yohannes Tesfamariam, for his commitment and dedicated service under very trying circumstances. He has also been kind enough to keep me informed on developments in the area.

I have been in close contact with Ngok Dinka leaders, both in Juba and Abyei, including my brother Bulabek Deng, who succeeded our assassinated brother, Kuol Deng, as Paramount Chief. I met with members of the strategic review team before and after their field visit. I also received from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs the 10-point recommendations which the Abyei community leaders presented to the team for strengthening the UNISFA mandate and which have been well reflected in the report.

The picture presented in the Secretary-General's report sadly reflects the realities on the ground as conveyed to me by these leaders. I should say that I have over the years had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Abyei with leading members of the Missiriya community and with Sudanese and South Sudanese leaders, as well as international mediators, including the Chairman of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki.

The situation now, in my opinion, has reached a point where creative ideas are needed to overcome the impasse on Abyei and to prevent the crisis from escalating into yet another catastrophic explosion in the region. The highest order of priority now is to stabilize the crisis situation in Abyei by establishing an effective administration and ensuring protection so that the population can return, resettle and lead a secure and productive life without the threat of violent attacks from neighbours.

In my opinion, the four options proposed by the Secretary-General present a critically important challenge for the United Nations and the Security Council in particular. Ending UNISFA and withdrawing the Ethiopian forces cannot be a viable option, as it would leave a dangerous security vacuum in the area. Indeed, the best thing going for the population in the area is the presence of the international community through UNISFA. The recommendations of the Abyei community

leaders are premised not only on the continuation of the UNISFA mandate, but also on its being reinforced and strengthened to play a greater and more effective role for the peace, security and development of the area.

As shown in the report, the next two options, maintaining the status quo and the United Nations assuming responsibility for implementing the Panel's (Mbeki's) proposal on Abyei, also pose significant problems. As is well known, President Salva Kiir accepted the proposal while President Beshir rejected it. We still stand in support of the proposal and would welcome further negotiations towards its implementation. The fourth option, which advocates intercommunal dialogue through the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the resumption of negotiations between the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan, is plausible, but has also met with obstacles on both sides.

In my opinion, elements of options 2, 3 and 4 need to be combined into a hybrid proposal. The presence of UNISFA, with strengthened capacity and mandate, is crucial, as is the urgent need to support Mbeki's proposal and the equally urgent need to facilitate intercommunal dialogue to promote Ngok Dinka-Missiriya reconciliation. A combination of these elements has the potential for stabilizing the situation in Abyei and restoring cordial and cooperative relations between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya communities. The proposed four-month extension of the UNISFA mandate, during which to develop a durable solution to the Abyei problem, is a very short period that calls for a speedy search for alternatives.

What follows are ideas which I have informally discussed with the various stakeholders over the years, including leaders on both sides, and which I now present in the hope that they may provide a common ground for all concerned during the interim or transitional period, pending agreement on the final status of Abyei. The thrust of these ideas is to establish an autonomous Abyei area under internationally supervised security arrangements in cooperation with the Governments of South Sudan and the Sudan. These arrangements would allow the area to stabilize, develop economically and restore its historic position as a bridge between the Sudan and South Sudan and a hub for trading livestock, grain and other commodities in the region.

The proposed arrangements should provide a framework for supporting the sustainable return, resettlement, reintegration and socioeconomic development of the Ngok Dinka population, with due consideration for and responding to the needs of the nomadic Missiriya Humr within their area of normal residence, as well as in the transitional zone of their dry-season migration, when they search for water and pastures in Abyei. It should be noted, however, that it is not only the Missiriya who migrate seasonally to the Abyei area; South Sudanese herders, both Dinka and Nuer, from several states also escape floods during the rainy season by moving to drier areas in Ngok land. This makes Abyei a genuine crossroads and bridge between the Sudan and South Sudan.

In the light of the security situations in both the Sudan and South Sudan, the fact that the two countries are now at a deadlock over Abyei is particularly dangerous for the region. The international community urgently needs to explore ways of reconciling the conflicting positions on Abyei by addressing two interrelated concerns: those of the Ngok Dinka who, though indigenous inhabitants of the area, perceive their very survival as a people to be at risk from persistent northern invasion, and those of the neighbouring Missiriya Humr who, although

nomadic herders, perceive their access to seasonal water and grazing to be threatened by the prospects of Abyei joining South Sudan.

The interim or transitional measures needed to address these concerns under UNISFA can be summarized in the following points:

1. Consolidating support for the establishment of an autonomous administration of the Ngok Dinka, including the three organs of Government — executive, legislative and judicial — and establishing a well-trained police force to maintain law and order;

2. Supporting the return and resettlement of the Ngok Dinka to their home areas in safety and dignity, providing essential social services, particularly in the areas of health and education, and meeting the humanitarian needs of returning and resident populations;

3. Facilitating the transition from humanitarian assistance to recovery and sustainable socioeconomic development, including building roads, constructing upgraded housing, improving agricultural production, promoting the employment of youth and former combatants and providing care for those made most vulnerable by war, especially women, children and the elderly;

4. Identifying and meeting the immediate needs of the Missiriya and other nomadic peoples during their seasonal migration in search of water and pastures and facilitating peace, reconciliation and cooperative relations between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya Humr, as stipulated in the Abyei Protocol;

5. Ensuring regional and international support for these interim or transitional arrangements and their operational frameworks in cooperation with South Sudan and the Sudan, soliciting financial backing from bilateral and multilateral donors, including the "troika" (Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States), the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, and guaranteeing that the oil revenues due to the local community are made available for the provision of services and development in the area.

These points should be seen in the context of the interconnected conflicts in the border areas of the Sudan and South Sudan. Abyei can become a flashpoint that compounds conflicts in both countries or can be a model for addressing the development and governance challenges that are at the root of these regional conflicts, especially through a system of decentralization and devolution of powers.

What I have outlined here does not substitute for the various agreements over Abyei that have been negotiated with international involvement, but whose implementation has stalled. Rather, it should be seen as an interim or transitional solution designed to promote peace, reconciliation and cooperation among the various stakeholders and create a more conducive environment for determining the final status of Abyei.